

WYCOMBE WANDERERS FOOTBALL CLUB



Handbook
1986 - 87

70p



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 1986/87 Handbook, a personal review of the 1985/86 season, our 101st.

Producing a handbook like this takes a lot of work by a lot of people, but taking on such a task is made simpler if you are given an inspiration. Personally, I was given great inspiration when I read an article in a local paper (on May 9th) in which a journalist wrote concerning our relegation and proposed ground move. His article concluded thus "It's all very sad for the dedicated fans, but few can be surprised at the outcome of possibly Wycombe's worst season in 100 years". I hope you all read and enjoy our story of the season, and decide for yourself on the accuracy of that journalist's assessment.

We thank all those who helped and contributed to this publication, particularly Simon Burrage for his emotive report of the season. Thanks also to the advertisers, without whom this handbook would not be possible, please support them in return. We also thank photographer Jeff Holmes, publishers P. K. Graphics and in particular, Secretary John Goldsworthy, for all their efforts.

Finally, I would like to thank you for buying this handbook (or are you just reading someone else's copy?). Please keep supporting the Wanderers even if fortunes don't continue in the same excellent way they have started. As we know oh so well, the promotion/relegation issues are never selected until the last match, of the season. Good Luck to Alan Gane and the Lads, here we go on the League Line.

Philip Ball, joint programme Editor.

Programme and Handbook Editors: Philip Ball & Paul Lewis
Other Contributors: Simon Burrage & Steve Maguire
Photographs: Jeff Holmes

Top: Anton Vircavs proudly holds the Dylon Charity Shield
Cover Photos: Middle: Simon Read scores the second goal against Colchester United.
Bottom: Bob Dell's disallowed goal at York City.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS 1985-86



Back Row:- Alan Gane (Manager), Gary Boyle, Neal Stanley, Dave Burgess, Gary Lester, Des McMahon, Josef Blochel, Billy Hubbick, Dave Springell (Physio). Front Row:- Anthony Riley, Mark West, Anton Vircavs, Bob Dell, Kevin Collins, Simon Read.

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REVIEW OF 1985-86

Unfortunately, and inevitably, 1985-86 will be remembered as "the season we were relegated". However, it would be totally misleading if this was the only thing we remember the season, for as it was also the season we competed in the Gola League for the first time, and indeed competed very well for the first seven months of the season; it was also the season we reached the Quarter-finals of the F A Trophy; reached the Final of the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup; knocked a Football League side out of the F A Cup and reached the 3rd Round for only the second time in the Club's history; and won the Dylon International Charity Shield for a third time.

Overall, the move to the Gola League was fully justified - the standard of football was better, more competitive, the prestige was greater, and the general public's interest in the Club increased. We spent almost the entire season in a comfortable league position, looking down on the relegation battle below us as being something of only academic interest, just involving other clubs, only to suddenly find ourselves at the end of the season fighting desperately to avoid the drop ourselves, but eventually failing only by virtue of having the worst goal difference of four clubs who finished on 36 points. So in looking back on the season as a whole, it must be remembered that there were many enjoyable moments, and in fact only relatively few disappointments - regretfully, those last few disappointments last the longest. In a way, it makes you wish we could have suffered relegation in November, and had those marvellous F.A. Cup successes over Burton, Colchester and Chelmsford in April or May.

Turning the clock back to August, there was an unmistakable air of optimism and excitement as the Clubs' first ever Gola League season approached. The progression to this top, national league was well publicised and it seemed that people were talking about Wycombe Wanderers who hadn't previously shown much interest. New players had been signed, most notably Neal Stanley, Sean Price and Des MacMahon, all from Paul Bence's previous club, Wokingham Town. It was obvious that such signings were necessary if Wycombe were to survive in this higher grade of football. Only Neal Stanley was still with the Club by the end of the season; Sean Price was unable to prise apart the Burgess - Vircavs partnership at the centre of the defence; and in midfield no place could be found for Des MacMahon.

The first of 5 (official) pre-season friendlies was on a Friday evening at Loakes Park against Fourth Division Crewe Alexandra, who finished 1-0 winners. Before this, unofficial matches had taken place at Bisham Abbey against the full first team squads of Sunderland (1-1) and Tottenham Hotspurs

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(lost 1-4), and it was Tottenham who provided the opposition for the second pre-season work-out at Loakes Park, though this time it was a reserve side that drew 3-3 with the Blues in an entertaining game before a good-sized crowd, despite it being a very wet night. Visits to Walton & Hersham, Newbury Town and Metropolitan Police led up to the first "competitive" match of the season, for the Dylon International Charity Shield at Sutton United.

Perhaps the sort of fixture which some may have regarded as just a glorified pre-season friendly, there was a lot of pride at stake on this particular occasion. Sutton, as Isthmian League Champions, were facing their old rivals Wycombe, as Hitachi Cup holders, and the team that was taking

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DECLAN LINK LAUNCHES HIMSELF AT SUTTON BUT THIS EFFORT WAS SADLY OFF TARGET.

the Gola League place only because of Sutton's rejection of 'promotion'. There always was a lot of rivalry between the two clubs, and we had come away from Gander Green Lane empty handed many times in the past. Not this time though as an impressive performance gave Wycombe a 3-1 win and Blues fans travelled home satisfied with seeing their Club



THIS RARE HEADED GOAL BY NEAL STANLEY WAS HIS FIRST FOR THE CLUB AND WYCOMBE'S THIRD AT SUTTON. take the Charity Shield and a Gola League place from Sutton. We were probably hoping that our move to the Gola League would mean we would not be visiting the Surrey club again for some time - thanks to one of fates ironic twists, we now have their Isthmian place and they our Gola place.

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The following Tuesday a team from Geneva College, U.S.A., provided the opposition before we began the serious business of the Gola League. As it turned out, the Americans were not much opposition at all; a 10-0 scoreline did not over-state the difference in class. Declan Link and Mark West scoring 4 apiece. Wycombe were now all set for the Club's first Gola League fixture; Saturday, 24th August, 1985, at home to Runcorn.

And what an anti-climax that turned out to be! Runcorn, traditionally one of the strongest Gola sides, were in no mood to allow us a winning start; having scored an early goal, they 'killed' the game in porofessional fashion and returned to Merseyside with 3 points. The attendance of 1036 was a slight disappointment to some, but this figure represented an increase of about 100% on the previous seasons



THE GOLA LEAGUE KICKS OFF AGAINST RUNCORN

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home league gates, a significant improvement by anyones' standards.

Two days later, on the Bank Holiday Monday, we had our first Gola League 'Local Derby' (!), away at Barnet. The home side, inspired by their brilliant midfield player, Eddie Stein, tore the Wanderers' defence to shreds for the first 20 minutes; only a combination of good luck and outstanding goalkeeping by Gary Lester kept the score sheet blank until just before half-time, when Neal Stanley sprinted into the Barnet penalty area and was obligingly chopped down by a rash Barnet defender. Declan Link stepped up to score from the



ANTON VIRCAVS SHOWS GRIM DETERMINATION BUT IT WAS NOT ENOUGH IN OUR FIRST GOLA MATCH AGAINST RUNCORN.

resulting penalty, giving us our first Gola League goal and indeed our first win as well, thanks to Gary Lester capping a fine individual performance by saving a Barnet penalty five minutes from full time.

The following Saturday we had our first trip "up north" on the M1/M6, a route which through the season was to become as familiar as the old North Circular Road was in the Isthmian League. Altrincham was the destination on this occasion. It was gratifying first to be watching Wycombe

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playing a league fixture at such a fine stadium, against a team of Altrincham's quality, who were many peoples' pre-season favourites for the Gola Championship. Right from the first whistle, it was again evident that the Blues had an uphill struggle on their hands. Quite frankly, Wycombe looked hopelessly out of their depth in the first 45 minutes as Altrincham attacked repeatedly with breath-taking speed, skill and accurate passing. They cruised into a 2 -0 lead, and we were grateful it was only 2 at half time, but the second half was a very different story, the Wycombe team showing impressive determination to fight back. Superb goals by Simon Read and Declan Link (2) pulled the scores up to 3-3, but this particular fairy-tale was not to be and it was Altrincham who scored the decisive seventh goal. They had always had that bit too much in reserve for us, but the players' second half performance had given the travelling

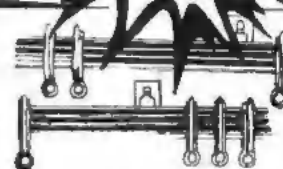
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Blues fans more than enough reason to be optimistic about the season ahead.

September began with a Tuesday night visit from Dartford, who included the now-legendary ex-Wanderer George Borg in their line-up. Two Declan Link penalties and a rare goal from Graham Pearce gave us the points by 3-2, and 7th place in the Gola League table, though of course after only 4 games no-one was reading too much into that. The following Saturday gave us our first league visit to Dagenham since their departure from the Isthmian League some years earlier. A scrappy, at times ill-tempered, game ended all square at 1-1; we led for 86 minutes of the match, Des MacMahon's perfect through pass having set up Simon Read to fire us ahead after about 45 seconds. This was followed by a midweek trip to Kent for the return match with Darford, where an uninspired performance resulted in a 0-1 defeat. Another defeat followed, this time at Loakes Park, at the hands (or feet) of Stafford Rangers by 2-4. Weymouth were our visitors in midweek for a First Round, First leg match in the Bob Lord Trophy. Wycombe did not play at all badly but Weymouth's deadly strikers gave them a 3-1 lead to defend - or extend - in their home leg. But before that, we had a little Saturday outing to Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria, for a league fixture against the club then rooted firmly to the bottom of the Gola League table.

Having in previous years regarded Billericay or Bognor Regis as being long distances to travel for

league matches, Barrow felt almost like a trip to the moon. Not that we were complaining; it was an enjoyable adventure just getting to the game. Despite the enormous distance involved, the regular coachload of supporters made the trip. In addition to these, a fair number preferred to travel in the relative comfort (and expense) of an Inter-City train from Watford via Preston. Oh yes, the match. In the dilapidated, decaying surroundings of Barrow's Holker Street ground (which might appear to the first-time visitor as though it has stood disused since Barrow's demise from the Football League in the late sixties) Wycombe pressed forward determinedly throughout the first half, but failed to make the most of the chances they created. Soon after half-time, however, Mark West forced the ball into the net following a corner, and having made the breakthrough we looked set for 3 points. Not even the arrival on the scene of Barrow's substitute, England International David Johnston (making his first appearance for Barrow) made much impression on the resolute Wycombe defence. But just as we were beginning to prepare for the long homeward journey with 3 points in the bag, literally in the last minute Dave Burgess was unable to block Cowperthwaite's shot on the goalline and suddenly we were facing a very, very long journey home with only 1 point, and a drop to 14th place in the league table.

So the following Wednesday it was down to Weymouth for the 2nd leg of the Bob Lord Trophy



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tie. A couple of hours in the amusement arcades on the seafront, something to eat and a few drinks in a nearby pub - it seemed more fun than a wet night at Carshalton (no offence meant, Carshalton - see you soon). Already 3-1 down from the 1st leg, Wycombe had nothing to lose by throwing caution to the wind. Neal Stanley surprised everyone, perhaps even himself, by thumping a superb 20 yarder past Len Bond in the Weymouth goal. But by the time Anton Vircays netted a second goal for us in the closing stages, Weymouth had scored 4 times on the night to take the tie 7-3 on aggregate. A hefty looking scoreline, but by no means a disgrace as Weymouth were at this time looking a classy side and likely contenders for the Championship, but a poor showing in the second half of the season put paid to their hopes.

The month of September ended on a high note, however. Enfield were the visitors to Loakes Park,

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DECLAN LINK'S FLYING HEADER GIVES US VICTORY OVER ENFIELD WHILST KEITH BARRETT LOOKS ON.

our old Isthmian adverseries, in recent years established as possibly the country's premier non-league football club. A crowd of 1068 turned out to see what kind of obstacle Wycombe would prove to Enfield's path towards the top of the Gola League. The home fans were delighted to see Wycombe prove a very difficult obstacle indeed; Declan Link's powerful first half header easily beat Andy Pape, Enfield's England Semi-Professional goalkeeper, and despite virtually camping in our half in the second period Enfield could not find a way past Gary Lester, who turned in yet another quite outstanding performance. The 1-0 win over Enfield, in front of a good crowd at Loakes Park, was a tremendous boost for the morale of the players, and supporters.

Into October now, and good home form continued with a comfortable 2-0 win over Nuneaton Borough, with a bizarre, scrambled goal credited to Simon Read and a more conventional one by Mark West. Spirits were high as we prepared for another long trek north, the following Saturday, to Scarborough. Having missed the departure of the other players on Friday, Neal Stanley travelled in the supporters coach (obviously the experience didn't agree with him, he had a poor game and was substituted) which left Wycombe early Saturday morning and arrived in Scarborough in enough time for everyone to spend a little time around the town or seafront, on what was, conveniently, a bright sunny day. Again a number of supporters made the trip by rail, this time from Kings Cross, via York. Inevitably it

always seems that the further you travel for a match, the more important the result feels to you; accordingly, our excellent 2-1 win that afternoon on the North Yorkshire coast is one of our happiest Gola League memories. It was our first ever trip to Scarborough's fine Seamer Road ground, to face a club who have been a "big name" in non-league football for many years. At the time of our visit, 'Boro were unbeaten at home and were looking capable of mounting a serious challenge for the top places in the league table, and for the first 20 minutes or so, they did everything but score. But as Wycombe's confidence grew, they weathered the early storm and began to cause the home defence a few problems as well. Shortly before half-time Mark West coolly side-footed home a simple chance to give us a creditable 1-0 lead at the break. Midway through the second half, just when Vircavs, Burgess and Co., were looking very capable of protecting that lead, a sloppy goal was conceded to level the scores at 1-1. We were quite happy at the prospect of returning home with a single point, but with just 5 minutes remaining Bob Dell scored a quite exquisite goal to win all 3 points for the travelling Blues. Picking up a loose ball in midfield, a purposeful run took him quickly towards the edge of the penalty area - Mark West, galloping ahead of him on the left hand side, pulled a home defender a shade too far across in anticipation of a pass, whereupon Bob unleashed a 20 yard guided missile passed a stunned 'keeper and into the far corner of the net. It was a goal that

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deserved to win the points, and it more than compensated for the late disappointment experienced at Barrow as Anton and the rest of the team acknowledged the jubilant Wycombe followers at the final whistle. The win at Scarborough took us to the heady heights of 8th place in the Gola League table. This was unfortunately to be our last league victory for 10 weeks.

A midweek journey to Maidstone finished 1-1 (what a quick journey that is now, with the M25 open), Declan Link having put us ahead with our only on-target goal attempt of the game, only for that man George Borg - just transferred from Dartford - to net an equaliser in the last 10 minutes. Nevertheless, the one point took us up one place to 7th in the table. The next Saturday saw another heavy defeat by Weymouth, 0-3 at Loakes Park. The Tuesday home match with Cheltenham Town was preceded by the news that in the 4th Qualifying Round of the F.A. Cup we would play at home to Burton Albion, just as we had done at the same stage of the previous seasons competition (the opportunity for revenge was quite welcome). After the 3-3 draw with Cheltenham, we had a trip to Cheshire to face Northwich Victoria; a poor performance was punished by a 0-4 defeat, and we slipped back to 13th in the league table. The last Tuesday in October had us travelling to Buckingham

Town for a 1st round Berks & Bucks Cup tie. Originally we had been drawn at home, but agreed to forfeit home advantage in return for Buckingham agreeing a midweek date. It was a typical Berks & Bucks tie for us in many ways. A shabby display against a spirited and not untalented Buckingham side looked likely to leave us with that familiar B & B "egg on face" feeling as Declan Link's (harshly awarded) penalty goal in the first half was deservedly equalised late in the second half; it appeared to be merely a question whether Buckingham would take their obligatory winning goal in the remaining few minutes of normal time, or in extra time, but then the home 'keeper inexplicably fumbled a weak last minute effort by Kevin Collin and Declan gratefully accepted the gift, and seconds later the match had ended with a very flattering 2-1 scoreline in our favour.

Burton duly arrived at Loakes Park the following Saturday, though with a side lacking many of the names that had lined up against us 12 months earlier. An early, cleverly lobbed goal by Simon Read after a bad defensive error was enough to put Neil Warnock & Co., out of the Cup and Wycombe into the 1st Round Proper; a home tie with 4th Division Colchester United was to be the reward.

In November, the 1-1 home draw with Barrow was not a good result, the Cumbrians still being

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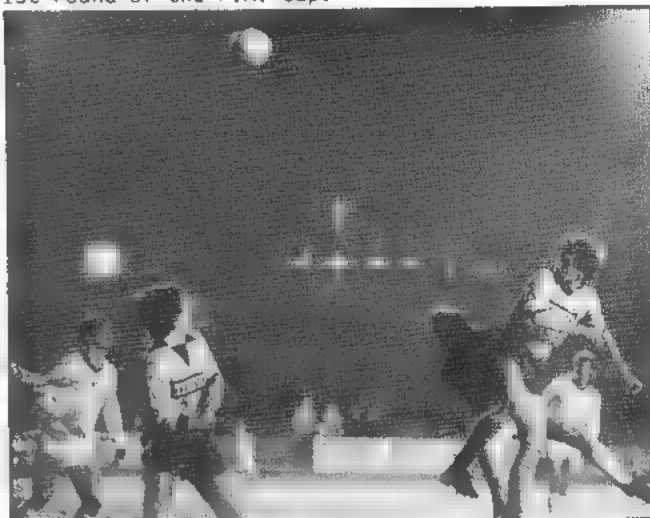
SIMON READ FORCES WYCOMBE'S SOLITARY GOAL AGAINST BURTON TO SECURE OUR F A CUP 1ST ROUND PLACE.

hopelessly adrift at the foot of the table. Worse still, it was followed by the shock revelation that Declan Link had accepted a one year job in America and would soon be leaving the Club. This was a severe blow - it was quite clear that Declan's all round ability up front, not to mention his prolific goalscoring, would be sorely missed. It's perhaps an obvious comment to make, but nevertheless probably true, that if Declan had not left we would have had no fears of relegation at the end of the season, and may have progressed even further in the F. A. Cup and F. A. Trophy. Declan did state that he intended to spend only a year in the USA; when, or if, he does return we can but hope he chooses to resume his football career with Wycombe Wanderers.

Our 0-2 defeat at Wealdstone was marred by some "controversial" tactics adopted by the reigning Gola League Champions and F.A. Trophy holders. Numerous incidents incensed Wycombe's travelling support and Paul Bence was scathing in his public condemnation of Wealdstone's approach, and his views were subsequently supported by Reading's management after they met Wealdstone in a violent F.A. Cup tie.

Our 2nd Round opponents in the County Cup were Hungerford Town. Although the Berkshire club had made a poor start to the season, most of the Blues fans arrived at Loakes Park for this encounter anticipating the usual stiff resistance from the Isthmian Second Division side; certainly none of us

expected a 9-0 win. Seven different Wanderers players got their names on the score sheet - including Des MacMahon, against his old club - as Hungerford's brittle defence crumbled. There was little doubt that Colchester would provide rather more formidable opposition four days later, in the 1st round of the F.A. Cup.



DAVE BURGESS FIRES HOMES WYCOMBE'S FOURTH GOAL IN OUR 9-0 THRASHING OF HUNGERFORD TOWN.

A crowd of over 3,000 gave Loakes Park that unmistakable big cup-tie atmosphere, the vast majority hoping they might see Wycombe put a Football League club out of the competition for the first time since the "Middlesbrough" Cup run of 1974-75. They were not disappointed. The Wycombe team were quite superb that afternoon, and their 2-0 win was no more than they deserved. A 3rd minutes goal - a near-post corner was flicked on by Declan Link and Mark West headed home from close range - settled any big match nerves, and shortly before the break Simon Read was put through with just the keeper to beat, and he gleefully buried the chance with a well placed shot. By the time the half-time whistle was blown Colchester were reeling as Wycombe ravaged their bewildered defence, now even searching for a third goal. The second half inevitably saw Colchester desperately trying to retrieve a lost cause; they never looked capable of putting two goals past a solid looking Wycombe defence. Perhaps it wasn't till the Sunday morning that the full significance of the result

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MARK WEST HEADS WYCOMBE AHEAD AFTER ONLY 3 MINUTES IN THE F A CUP AGAINST COLCHESTER.

sank in. All around High Wycombe Blues fans could be seen raiding their local newsagents for as many Sunday newspapers as they could find; Wycombe Wanderers, for this particular weekend at least, were national news, and it made very enjoyable reading. The 2nd Round draw gave us a home tie with Chelmsford City, then in the lower depths of the Southern League Premier Division. Suddenly, it was difficult not to dream of a possible - very possible - 3rd Round appearance.

We soon came back down to earth though, losing 3-1 at Bath City the following Saturday, despite scoring first through Mark West and creating a great chance for 2-0 shortly before conceding an equaliser. This result lowered us to 17th place in the league table.



DECLAN LINK BLASTS HOME AGAINST NORTHWICH. THIS WAS HIS LAST APPEARANCE FOR WYCOMBE WANDERERS.

The last Saturday in November brought Northwich to Loakes Park for what was Declan Link's last game before leaving for the U.S.A. On the whole the game was a rather uninspired 1-1 draw; but it was at least good to see Declan departing with a goal. Not the best goal of the 24 he notched in the 4 months he played, but probably the most bizarre. The Northwich keeper pulled off an excellent save from Declan's original penalty kick, only for the referee to rule that he had moved too soon. Declan tried again, and again the 'keeper saved - and that would have been that, but the keepers defiant gesticulations towards the referee were deemed worthy of an indirect free-kick, for ungentlemanly conduct, by the official. Almost the entire Northwich team lined up along the goal-line - the

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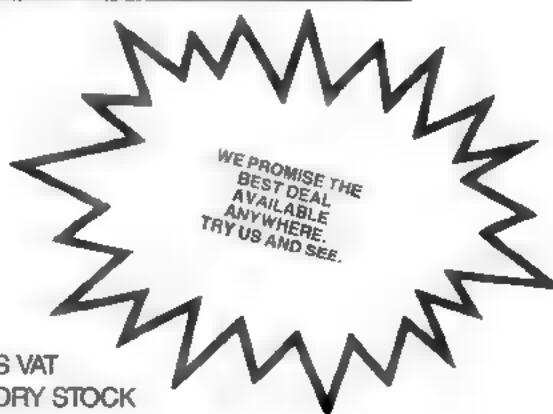


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- LARGE NISSAN PARTS & ACCESSORY STOCK



F. A. TROPHY 1985-86

1ST ROUND	2ND ROUND	3RD ROUND	4TH ROUND	SEMI-FINALS	FINAL
*Ryhope C.H.	*Waterheadham	*Waterheadham	*Waterheadham	*Waterheadham	
*Widener's Town	*Banger City				
*Salford Rangers	*Salford Rangers				
*Nelson Boro.					
*Bishop Auckland	*Bishop Auckland				
*Blyth Spartans					
*Adrian					
*Sunderland United					
*Challinham Town	*Challinham Town				
*Fisher Athletic	*Fisher Athletic				
*Walsingham Town	*Walsingham Town				
*Worthing V.I.C.	*Worthing V.I.C.				
*Hartington					
*Walsingham	*Walsingham				
*Helling United					
*Ramsbottom Utd	*Ramsbottom Utd				
*Frickley A.	*Frickley A.				
*Walsingham Utd					
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BERKS & BUCKS SENIOR CUP 1985-86

PRELIMINARY ROUND		FIRST ROUND		SECOND ROUND		THIRD ROUND		SEMI FINAL		FINAL	
			Wycombe Wanderers	2	1						
			Buckingham Town	1	1	Wycombe Wanderers	9				
			Hungerford Town	1	1	Hungerford Town	0				
			Milton Keynes Boro'	1	1			Wycombe Wanderers	3		
Marlow	1	1	Maidenhead United	4	1	Maidenhead United	7	Maidenhead United	1		
Maidenhead T	2	2	Chalfont St. Peter	3	1	Chalfont St. Peter	4				
			Didcot Town	1				Wycombe Wanderers	3		
			Flackwell Heath	(2)	4	Flackwell Heath	1	Flackwell Heath	1	Wycombe Wanderers (2)	0
			New Bradwell St.P	(2)	0	Wolverton Town	0				
			Newport Pagnell	(1)	0						
			Wolverton Town	(1)	1	Flackwell Heath	1				
			Wokingham Town	bye		Wokingham Town	0				
			Hazells	0	1	Bracknell Town	0				
			Bracknell Town	1						both games at	
			Winslow United	3						at	
			Wantage Town	2	1	Winslow United	0			Slough Town F.C.	
			Amersham Town	0	1	Abingdon United	1				
			Abingdon United	1		Abingdon Utd (2)	1				
			Wallingford Town	2		Windsor & Eton(2)	0				
			Windsor & Eton	5	3						
			Slough Town	2	1			Abingdon United	0		
			Reading	1				Aylesbury United	3	Aylesbury United (2)	1
			Abingdon Town	1							
			Aylesbury United	2	1	Aylesbury United	1				
Burnham	0	0	Thatcham Town	2	0			Aylesbury United	4		
Thatcham Town	2	2	Newbury Town	0				Chesham United	2		
			Chesham United	bye							
			Chesham United		2						
Beaconsfield Utd	3	3	Beaconsfield United	5	0	Beaconsfield Utd	0				
Olney Town	1	1	Holmer Green	0							

N.B. Club drawn at home shown first in each case. Wycombe v Buckingham played at Buckingham

VAUXHALL OPEL LEAGUE TABLES 1985-86

PREMIER DIVISION

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sutton Utd	42	29	8	5	109	39	95
Yeovil Town	42	28	7	7	92	48	91
Farnborough	42	23	8	11	90	50	77
Croydon	42	23	7	12	70	50	76
Harrow Boro	42	21	8	13	76	66	71
Slough Town	42	18	8	16	66	68	62
Bishops Cleeve	42	17	10	15	55	61	61
Kingstonian	42	15	15	12	57	56	60
Dulwich Hamlet	42	17	9	16	64	79	60
Wokingham Town	42	16	10	16	67	64	58
Windsor & Eton	42	17	7	18	58	75	58
Tooting M.C.	42	14	11	17	65	76	53
Walthamstow A.	42	12	14	16	70	70	50
Worthing	42	13	10	19	72	70	49
Bognor Regis	42	15	6	21	63	70	48*
Hayes	42	10	17	15	36	42	47
Hitchin Town	42	11	14	17	53	69	47
Barking	42	11	13	18	45	55	46
Hendon	42	10	13	19	59	77	43
Carshalton A.	42	9	13	20	56	79	40
Billerica T.	42	9	12	21	59	78	39
Epsom & Ewell	42	8	12	22	63	90	36

* 3 points deducted by league.

DIVISION ONE

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
St. Albans C.	42	23	11	8	92	61	80
Bromley	42	24	8	10	68	41	80
Wembley	42	22	12	8	59	30	78
Oxford City	42	22	11	9	75	51	77
Hampton	42	21	11	10	63	45	74
Leyton Minge	42	21	10	11	77	56	73
Uxbridge	42	20	8	14	64	49	68
Staines Town	42	18	10	14	69	66	64
Boreham Wood	42	15	16	11	62	54	61
Walton & Her.	42	16	10	16	68	71	58
Lewes	42	16	8	18	61	75	56
Leytonstone/II	42	13	15	14	57	67	54
Finchley	42	12	17	13	61	59	53
Grays Athletic	42	13	11	18	69	75	50
Leatherhead	42	14	8	20	62	68	50
Tilbury	42	13	11	18	60	66	50
Maidenhead Utd	42	13	7	22	61	67	46
Basildon Utd	42	12	9	21	52	72	45
Hornchurch	42	11	11	20	44	59	44
Chesham Utd	42	12	6	24	51	87	42
Harlow Town	42	8	14	20	53	70	38
Aveley	42	8	6	28	59	70	30

DIVISION TWO NORTH

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Stevenage B.	38	26	6	6	71	44	84
Kingsbury T.	38	25	8	5	84	35	83
Heybridge Sw.	38	20	8	10	65	46	68
Cheshunt	38	18	10	10	64	54	64
Hertford Town	38	17	7	14	60	58	58
Chalfont St.P.	38	15	11	12	53	50	56
Tring Town	38	14	13	11	58	55	55
Royston Town	38	13	13	12	59	57	52
Saffron W. T.	38	13	12	13	61	51	51
Berkhamsted T.	38	14	8	16	45	52	50
Harlingey B.	38	14	7	17	49	51	49
Letchworth G.C.	38	13	8	17	46	52	47
Rainham Town	38	14	4	20	54	91	46
Hemel Hemp.	38	12	9	17	66	45	45
Ware	38	11	11	16	66	61	44
Vauxhall Motor	38	11	10	17	58	62	43
Barton Rovers	38	12	7	19	50	60	43
Harefield Utd	38	9	12	17	56	72	39
Clapton	38	10	7	21	51	90	37
Wolverton Town	38	8	11	19	42	58	35

DIVISION TWO SOUTH

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Southwick	38	25	8	5	86	34	83
Bracknell Town	38	24	9	5	80	23	81
Woking	38	23	9	6	94	45	78
Newbury Town	38	22	7	9	86	53	73
Whyteleafe	38	21	10	7	61	41	73
Molesey	38	21	8	9	59	39	71
Met. Police	38	20	6	12	72	48	66
Southall	38	19	7	12	77	59	64
Dorking	38	18	10	10	70	57	64
Falham	38	16	7	15	65	60	55
Banstead Ath.	38	15	8	15	60	66	53
Petersfield U.	38	12	9	17	61	71	45
Hungerford F.	38	11	6	21	57	78	39
Frickwell H.	38	11	6	21	46	72	39
Eastbourne Utd	38	9	8	21	51	81	35
Cambridge F.	38	9	7	22	53	64	34
Egham Town	38	7	8	23	41	83	29
Horsham	38	6	10	22	33	74	28
Ruislip Manor	38	5	12	21	44	87	27
Marlow	38	6	5	27	47	108	23

CAPITAL LEAGUE

1985-86

FINAL LEAGUE TABLE 1985/86

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Gillingham	9	6	0	3	26	11	18
Wealdstone	9	5	2	2	28	23	17
Enfield	9	4	2	3	21	24	14
Dagenham	9	4	3	2	14	17	14*
Orient	9	4	1	4	12	15	13
Wycombe	9	4	1	4	19	18	12*
Wimbledon	9	3	2	4	23	16	11
Southend	9	3	2	4	20	29	11
Brentford	9	3	1	5	26	19	10
Barnet	9	2	0	7	15	32	6

*No points awarded for a goalless draw

ATTENDANCES

GOLA LEAGUE ATTENDANCES 1985/86

CLUB	LEA POS	SEASONS AGGREGATE	SEASONS AVERAGE	HIGHEST v	LOWEST v
1 Boston	(13)	27,305	1300	2067 v Wealdstone	1029 v Telford
2 Telford	(8)	23,288	1109	1557 v Enfield	895 v Boston
3 Stafford	(7)	22,875	1089	1958 v Telford	784 v Dagenham
4 Kettering	(9)	22,302	1062	1951 v Boston	532 v Cheltenham
5 Altrincham	(4)	21,454	1022	1340 v Enfield	652 v Dagenham
6 Cheltenham	(11)	21,252	1012	1311 v Weymouth	714 v Barrow
7 Weymouth	(5)	17,149	817	1401 v Enfield	606 v Barrow
8 Enfield	(1)	16,294	776	1112 v Wycombe	546 v Barrow
9 Wycombe	(20)	16,272	775	1068 v Enfield	537 v Dagenham
10 Kidderminster	(3)	15,960	760	1421 v Frickley	512 v Boston
11 Nuneaton	(18)	15,558	741	1116 v Kettering	369 v Weymouth
12 Barnet	(14)	14,788	704	1455 v Enfield	442 v Bath
13 Wealdstone	(10)	14,691	700	1323 v Enfield	304 v Stafford
14 Maidstone	(17)	14,657	698	854 v Dartford	541 v Frickley
15 Northwich	(16)	14,448	688	1234 v Altrincham	367 v Dagenham
16 Scarborough	(15)	13,924	663	1299 v Altrincham	452 v Cheltenham
17 Bath	(12)	12,006	572	758 v Wycombe	402 v Kettering
18 Runcorn	(6)	11,930	568	970 v Northwich	374 v Barnet
19 Dagenham	(19)	11,366	541	836 v Enfield	402 v Telford
20 Frickley	(2)	10,697	509	782 v Scarborough	312 v Kidderminster
21 Barrow	(22)	10,085	480	891 v Maidstone	317 v Kidderminster
22 Dartford	(21)	9,893	471	692 v Maidstone	349 v Barrow

{ } = Final League Position.

Wycombe Wanderers Football Club

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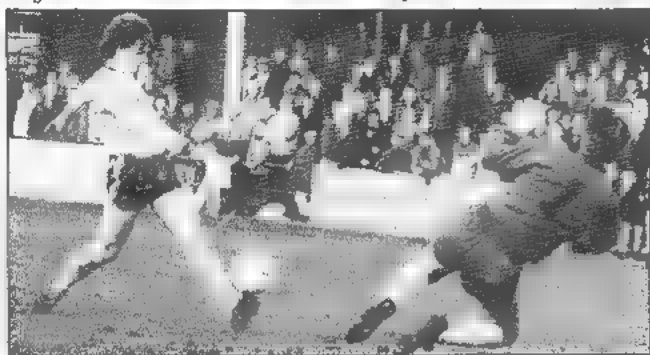
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ball was touched back and Link hammered it home off the underside of the crossbar! We could do with more referees like that one, seemingly determined to see us score.

December began with the eagerly awaited Chelmsford F.A. Cup match. The Southern Leaguers were now on a vastly improved run of form, and included former Wycombe favourite Terry Glynn and England International Peter Taylor in their side.



SIMON READ COOLLY SLOTS WYCOMBE'S 1ST GOAL AGAINST CHELMSFORD AFTER ONLY 14 MINUTES.

Wycombe, for their part, fielded new signing Joe Blochel for the first time, formerly of Karlstad (Sweden), Southampton, Wimbledon, R.S. Southampton and St. Mary's C of E Primary School, Beaconsfield where they still play for the Blochel Trophy. The Essex club brought enormous support with them (Loakes Park was segregated by barriers to keep rival fans apart; unfortunately, there was trouble before, during and after the match, at the ground and in the town centre). A crowd of almost 4,000 filled the terraces to see which of the two non-league clubs would take the treasured place with the major clubs in the 3rd Round. With the stakes so high it was, not surprisingly, a disjointed, unattractive match, but one of nail-biting tension. Simon Read's cool finishing skills gave us an early lead which was held until half-time. Midway through the second period, Chelmsford's 'keeper dashed recklessly from his goal, lost the ball and was unable to recover his position quickly enough, and Des MacMahon drove a splendid 30 yard goal. At the final whistle, we had won 2-0, and 45 minutes of celebration followed - we really were through to the 3rd Round of the F.A. Cup, and the Blues Club was soon crammed full of people excitedly debating who they wanted in the draw. "York City will play Wycombe Wanderers" said the voice on the radio. Groans of disappointment filled the clubhouse, people slumped back in their seats in dismay. Despite trying to convince ourselves otherwise, it was just about as bad as it could have been, for there would be little glamour in playing at York, and little chance of progressing further in the competition either, as York were a good 3rd Division side. Suddenly you couldn't help wishing the draw had not been done till Monday; at least we could have enjoyed the weekend.

THURLOW LUCAS JANES CHARTERED ARCHITECTS

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The Partners and Staff wish you well for the coming Season and look forward to seeing you in the First Division before too long as Wimbledon have done.



THE TWO GOALSCORERS, DES MACMAHON AND SIMON READ CELEBRATE AFTER THE CHELMSFORD VICTORY.

Back to league action once again, a comfortable 4-1 home win over Boston United was followed by our F.A. Trophy 1st Round tie, at Barnet. Again we came away from the North London club with a precious 1-0 victory, secured once again by a first half penalty; a 2nd Round trip to Crawley Town of the Southern League was to be the reward for this satisfying result. There was the traditional full programme of league matches on Boxing Day - the Gola League had managed to arrange the customary

local derby for each club with the exception, for some reason, of ourselves and Nuneaton, so it was a Boxing Day spent on the motorways up to a cold, wet and windy Nuneaton. The Midlands Club were then second from bottom of the league table, and going through such a poor run of results that they were looking likely candidates for relegation. (The irony of it hurts!)

We lost 3-0. Merry Christmas everybody!

The last Saturday of 1985 was filled at short notice by a trip to Weymouth for a league fixture that had originally been scheduled for a midweek date in February. After we had checked that the overnight frost had not been severe enough to postpone the game, and having travelled down to the Dorset coast once more, the referee decided to abandon the game after a goalless first 25 minutes played on a rock hard surface. He took this decision just moments after Joe Blochel had very nearly scored what would have been his first goal for the Club, with a low drive - perhaps the ref felt this was an indication that conditions were too farcical to continue.

Our first match of 1986 was "the big one", at York City in the 3rd Round of the F.A. Cup. Although York were not exactly our ideal choice of opponents for this stage of the competition, it was nevertheless an exciting occasion to be travelling north for such a prestigious match. Many hundreds of fans made the trip from Wycombe, the majority of whom took advantage of a specially arranged supporters train. However, as a result of a midweek snow fall and a week of sub-zero temperatures the question on everyone's mind during the journey was not so much "will we get a result" as "will the match be played?" The answers were no, and yes. Wycombe's players, so determined to get the result their travelling supporters hoped for, froze on the occasion, literally and metaphorically. The slippery, hard surface prevented either side playing the football they were capable of, and though with a little more luck we might have had a goal or two ourselves, the 3rd Division side were always well in command and a goal in each half ended our Cup dreams for another year. Despite the inevitable feeling of

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anti-climax, Wycombe's players and supporters had been a credit to their Club.

Before the league programme was resumed with a home match against Maidstone, there were two big shocks in store for Blues fans. Paul Bence was leaving the Club, due to his increased responsibilities at work. Having brought us so much success - promotion to the Gola League, the Hitachi Cup and an F A Cup 3rd Round appearance - in such a short space of time, this was a major blow. Alan Gane, his assistant, was immediately put in charge. As if this news was not enough to take in, the Bucks Free Press revealed that Loakes Park was to be sold for building development and a new football ground constructed at Sands.

Two late-ish goals from Mark West (penalty) and Joe Blochel (his first for Wycombe) only just prevented Maidstone from taking their first away league win of the season from Loakes Park. Then it was Trophy time again, Crawley being the destination in Round 2. The Sussex side were going well in the top half dozen places in the Southern League Premier Division Table, and the game pulled in a large crowd, including a substantial number from Wycombe. Despite a quagmire pitch, Wycombe put in a tremendous first half performance and thoroughly deserved the 2-0 half time lead that delighted the travelling Blues fans. The first goal was an astonishing own goal by a Crawley defender who, under little pressure, calmly lobbed his own 'keeper from 30 yards out. The second was



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a superbly placed shot by Joe Blochel. Gary Lester again saved a second half penalty, Wycombe defended their lead well, and 2-0 was the final, satisfying result. When the 3rd Round draw was made we were delighted to hear we had a home tie against Leek Town of the North West Counties League; delighted, because although we knew we shouldn't count our chickens etc., Leek could hardly be rated as tough opposition for this stage of the F.A. Trophy.

After a home win over Maidenhead United in the 3rd Round of the B & B, we travelled with some trepidation to Enfield for our return league fixture. Enfield hadn't been beaten in 4 months, their last reverse having been by that single goal at Loakes Park back in September. The North London club were in frighteningly good form, they were perched proudly at the top of the league table and appeared to be well on their way to taking the Championship once again. All the signs pointed towards Enfield taking revenge for that September defeat. Just how does one begin to describe what happened at Southbury Road that afternoon? In any case, none of the numerous Wycombe supporters who were among the 1,112 crowd will need any reminding of the course of events. It wasn't until midway through the first half that Enfield scored their first goal, which had looked on the cards since the kick-off. But soon afterwards, Wycombe attacked (!). they not only entered Enfield's half, but Neal Stanley even made it into their penalty area,

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where he missed his attempted cross, but was conveniently chopped down as he did so by a clumsy Enfield challenge. Bobby Dell stepped up, closed his eyes and hammered the penalty home just under the crossbar. Enfield could not improve on the 1-1 scoreline before half-time, but soon after the break they regained their lead. For the remainder of the game it seemed the ball hardly left the Wycombe penalty area. Enfield's strikers, midfield players and defenders alike all fluffed simple chances, had shots blocked and scrambled away and saw Gary Lester play the game of his life, stopping everything that was shot, headed or deflected towards him. But it all seemed so academic; a third goal seemed so unnecessary, for not only were Wycombe looking unlikely to score, they were looking unlikely to cross the half way line again! Enfield had forced 24 corners to Wycombe's 2 (or was it 3, even?!) by the time the game entered its last couple of minutes, Enfield still strolling at 2-1. But Wycombe had the audacity to mount one last token attack - the ball was played in to Simon Read, who turned just inside the Enfield penalty area, and was promptly tripped for another penalty to Wycombe. A look at the watch showed we were already into the 90th minutes as Bob Dell tightly shut those eyes again and whacked the ball into the roof of the net. 2-2! It was outrageous! We had (apparently) got a draw from surely the most one sided match any of us had ever seen. Enfield's players - and supporters - were shattered they probably couldn't believe it any more than we could. They re-started the game knowing it was almost certainly too late to regain the lead they had held so comfortably for so long. Seconds later they found themselves having to line-up to defend a Wycombe corner-kick; the ball came over and skidded into the crowded six yard box. Suddenly Mark West had the ball at his feet, and then the ball was rolling into the Enfield net. 3-2! 3-2! 3-2! Wycombe players celebrated wildly and behind the goal Blues fans leaped around hysterically, frothing at the mouth and gibbering incoherently. Ambulance klaxons blared as strait jackets and oxygen masks arrived for the Blues fans - police sirens wailed as the local constabulary arrived to arrest the 11 Wycombe players for

committing sheer daylight robbery - the Samaritans were called in to talk Eddie McClusky out of jumping off the roof of the Stand - and a couple of car loads of Wycombe supporters who'd left in disappointment 2 minutes from time swerved wildly across the A10 as the radio gave the final result. Footnote: Enfield went on to win the Championship and Wycombe were the only club to record a league 'double' over them. (Pity we got relegated though).



MARK WEST TURNS AWAY IN JUBILATION AFTER SCORING THE WINNER AT ENFIELD. ANTON LOOKS ON.

February brought Scarborough to Loakes Park, and a 2-1 victory gave us another league double. The following Wednesday we made our third trip of the

season to Weymouth for the re-arranged league fixture. After conceding a goal in the opening couple of minutes, Wycombe turned in a very impressive display; Neal Stanley struck a perfect shot from the edge of the box for an equaliser early in the second half. From then on, some brilliant attacking moves had the Weymouth defence in all kinds of trouble but the finishing touch proved to be elusive and a thoroughly deserved point was taken from a 1-1 draw. Driving back up the M3 that night, it began to snow - by the time we arrived back in Wycombe, a substantial amount of snow had fallen. It was the start of a long month of freezing snow and ice, and no-one will need reminding of the chaos it caused to club fixture lists all over the country. The Saturday's home F.A. Trophy 3rd Round tie against Leek was soon called off, but despite the pitch still being covered in snow, and like an ice-rink underneath, the referee allowed the game to proceed four days later. It was not long before many of us were wishing he hadn't. With the counter attraction of a Milk Cup Semi-Final live on television, and bitterly cold temperatures, the crowd of 417 was perhaps as many as a thousand below what could have been expected if the game had gone ahead in normal conditions the previous Saturday. As for the match itself, it was soon evident that it was not football in anyone's language (except perhaps Torvill and Dean's). Either side could have won, but the 2-2 result was apparently reason enough for Leek to rejoice as though they had just won the

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Trophy itself. Perhaps rather arrogantly, we felt sure that Leek would pay the price for that celebration once we had the opportunity to play them on a more reasonable surface, even if the Staffordshire club would now have home advantage for the replay. Our thoughts temporarily turned back to League business with an away match at Boston United, whose superb York Street ground we had previously visited for an F.A. Trophy replay a few seasons back. That the game at Boston went ahead at all was a story in itself - with virtually the whole country still frozen and snowed in, most clubs resigned themselves to a weekend off. Boston, however, had other ideas, and called in an army of volunteers to clear tons of snow from their pitch which when uncovered was found to be quite playable. A last minute equaliser from Mark West sent us home from Lincolnshire happy with a point (and a handy score-draw on the pools coupons - if only I could have picked another seven). This match marked the Wycombe debut of Neil Price, a 23 year old defender who arrived with much publicity given to the fact that he had played First Division football with Watford just 3 seasons earlier, and even appeared for them in the F.A. Cup Final. He looked to be an impressive capture by Alan Gane, but surprisingly was given little chance to adapt to the non-League game.

It came as no surprise when the Leek replay was postponed, but we certainly did not expect the freezing weather to last, as it did, for another fortnight, during which time the Leek replay was repeatedly postponed, in turn causing our Berks and Bucks Cup Semi-Final with Flackwell Heath also to be delayed. By the time we eventually journeyed north to Leek for the 3rd Round replay, the date for the 4th Round had already passed, and there was the unusual situation of knowing not only who the winners could face in the next round, but who they might play in the Semi-Finals as well.

Leek's long run in the Trophy, starting from the qualifying rounds, had aroused great interest in the small town. Looking at their position in the North West Counties League table it was clearly a remarkable achievement to have lasted so long in the competition, though they had obviously done so on merit. Over a thousand spectators crowded into their ground. Any hopes we had of seeing Wycombe exerting their assumed authority on a decent surface vanished for the thaw had left the pitch a horrible mess of thick sticky mud. The final, amazing scoreline of 5-5 (after extra-time) was largely due to these near farcical conditions, but it wasn't exactly the dulllest game we've ever seen, was it?! Of course, it was excitement that some of us could have done without - couldn't we have just had a nice little 2-0 win? We led the scoring on four occasions 1-0, 2-1, 3-2, and 5-4, but each time Leek produced an equaliser, and each time they

did so our stomachs churned (no, nothing to do with those baked beans in the service station), with the fear that Leek may steal a winner. But Wycombe's determination to avoid defeat was just as great as Leek's, and indeed they probably would have won if Bobby Dell's penalty kick had not struck a post instead of putting us 4-2 up with about 20 minutes left. Soon after that penalty miss, Leek scored twice to lead 4-3 with just 10 minutes remaining. It seemed the end was near; Leek's players and manager - who seemed to spend as much time running and jumping on the pitch and he did sitting on the bench - were about to become local heroes. The whole ground (perhaps the whole town) seemed to fill with Northern voices singing "here we go, here we go". The sky looked black (like the pitch), we felt sick (as a parrot) and it seemed a long, long way back to Wycombe. But like an angel from heaven (or something like that), with just 5 minutes left, Neal Stanley danced across the boggy wasteland that was Leek's penalty area and slipped the ball under the diving 'keeper who had so blatantly flattened him 15 minutes earlier for that missed penalty. Simon Read put us ahead yet again in extra time but, inevitably, Leek equalised once more. It was a great relief to survive undefeated that night - at various times during the evening all the indications were that the "shock result" was on the cards - but Wycombe's players responded magnificently and matched Leek's commitment all the way. A second replay would now take place, on

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a neutral ground - and still we looked forward to playing Leek on grass.

Two nights later the players were not too fatigued to dispose comfortably of Flackwell Heath's challenge in the Semi-Final of the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup, by 3-0 at Loakes Park. With this match taking place right in the middle of the Leek Town saga, what should have been a proud local occasion against our near-neighbours rather passed us by with little thought; Blues supporters could think only of Leek. Less than 48 hours later, however, we had a Saturday League trip to Frickley Athletic, yet another club we were visiting for the first time. It was a very enjoyable and interesting day, arriving at the Yorkshire mining village of South Elmsall and its football club which itself was called Frickley Colliery F C until quite recently. We conceded an own goal shortly before half-time, but equalised with a neatly constructed move and cool finishing by Mark West in the second half. Frickley restored their lead and for a long period looked set to wrap the game up with a third goal, but to their surprise and our delight a brilliantly lobbed equaliser by Joe Blochel 10 minutes from time earned us a share of the points to soothe another long journey home on the motorways.

Worcester City was the venue for the next installment of the Leek story; and yes, at last, a flat, grassy surface! The vociferous, passionate support from both sets of fans was matched by the commitment and aggression on the field (in more ways than one). Neal Stanley shot us ahead after 5 minutes but it soon became clear that Leek were going to match us on any surface. Only that single goal separated the sides as the game entered its last 10 minutes. Unfortunately the tension became too much for a couple of spectators, the Leek goalkeeper and one of his defenders; the game came to an abrupt halt as spectators and players brawled in the goalmouth, as the other 600 or so inside the ground looked on in amazement, hardly able to believe what they were seeing. When "calm" was finally restored, the goalkeeper was sent off, presumably for his original unnecessary attack on Joe Blochel. His dismissal may only have served to strengthen the resolve of his team-mates; the

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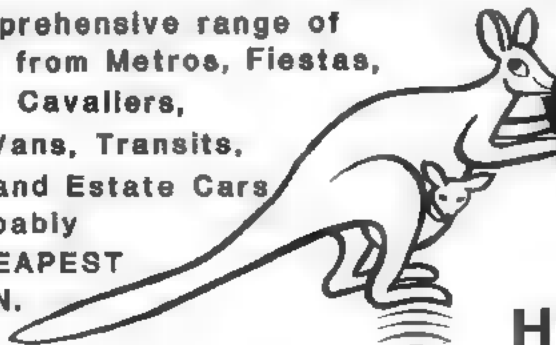
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incident certainly broke Wycombe's concentration, as an equaliser was conceded virtually straight from the restart. Another half an hour of extra time failed to produce another goal, even with Leek having an outfield player between the sticks for the whole period. At the final whistle, with the score still 1-1 it was again the Leek players and supporters who had cause to celebrate. Who would have the last laugh?

Back we went to Worcester three nights later. By now there was so much pride at stake, in what had become a minor football war, that the prospect for eventual winners of visiting Kettering Town in the Quarter-Finals was virtually forgotten. Not surprisingly, the local police took steps to ensure that all the excitement was kept under control this time, and this resulted in the extraordinary arrangement of a crowd of less than 700 being

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MARK WEST PUTS AN END TO THE LEEK MARATHON WITH THIS WELL TAKEN WINNER IN THE 3RD REPLAY.

strictly segregated. Mark West put us ahead in the opening minute of the second half; Leek finally ran out of steam and this time could find no reply. It was finally over! We had won. The 3rd round tie finally had a result, 33 days after its first scheduled date, and after 7 hours of football. Not a record in itself, but it's not every season you see a series of matches like that. Naturally, the tie took its toll on the players both mentally and physically.

After a 2-0 home league win over Barnet on the Saturday, it was back to the tension of the Trophy on Monday. With just Kettering, whose league record was similar to our own, and a two-legged semi-final barring the way to that dream Wembley Final, it was hardly ideal preparation for such a crucial match to have played 6 competitive (some



A FLYING NEAL STANLEY SCORES WYCOMBE'S SECOND IN OUR 2-0 WIN OVER BARNET.

very) matches in the previous 12 days. (Perhaps Leek Town did ultimately knock us out of the competition - not directly themselves, but by wearing the players down sufficiently for Kettering to take advantage). Travelling up the M1 to Kettering, however, it was difficult not to be optimistic about the way our season was going. Now in mid-March, Alan Gane's men had not lost a single match since the 4th January, at York. Morale was high; results in the Gola League were still going well, a trip to the Twin Towers in May

was still a distinct possibility, and it seemed the County Cup Final would be there for the taking in April. 2,300 fans filed into Kettering spacious ground. Four minutes gone, an error by the home keeper, Simon Read connects from close range and the ball is hacked out of the net by a desperate defender but referee and linesman rule that the ball was over the line. We lead 1-0 and things seem to be going frightening well.

We lost 2-1. End of Wembley dream and, one is tempted to say, end of season for Wycombe Wanderers. Left with our league position on which to concentrate, out of 14 remaining fixtures we won 1, drew 3 and lost 10. Our dream season quickly turned into a nightmare.

Telford United and Bath each took 3 points from visits to Loakes Park, 2-1 and 4-1 respectively. There was at least some light relief - for the 64 paying spectators who were present anyway - when Wealdstone fielded what was virtually a full strength squad when they came to us for a Thursday night Capital League fixture, and lost 4-3 to a Wycombe side full of reserves. Our Gola League visit to Stafford two days later had "dismal defeat" written all over it when our opponents took a 1-0 lead shortly after half-time (in the middle of a violent rainstorm), as we were making no impression whatsoever up front. Stafford scored again in the last few minutes - but at the wrong end, and we could only be grateful for the point that the own goal presented us. With just a quarter of our league fixtures remaining, we were now positioned quite comfortably in 14th place, with 32 points for 31 games. The schedule ahead of us involved playing twice, sometimes 3 times a week in order to complete our programme - perhaps similar to the situation 12 months earlier, though of course the distances being travelled then were nothing like as taxing. We did at least look set to end March on a winning note when on Easter Monday a Dave Burgess header gave us a 1-0 half time lead at home to Frickley, but defensive errors in the second half paved the way for the Yorkshiremen's 3-1 recovery, and another home defeat for us.

Kidderminster Harriers were a team in tremendous form when they arrived at Loakes Park at the beginning of April, and it showed as they won 5-2 - though then superiority only became evident in the last 15 minutes, when they scored 3 times. This was our 4th consecutive home league defeat. A Tuesday evening fixture at Runcorn, who had just secured a place in the F. A. Trophy Final at the expense of Kettering, saw us defeated more convincingly than the 2-1 scoreline may suggest. Runcorn were obviously a good side - apart from their "goalkeeper", who that night was the bulky, ageing figure of a Mr. Peter Eales. It was evident from the reaction of the home fans when his name was announced over the tannoy before

kick-off that he was not Runcorn's first choice 'keeper by any means, and it was his fumble that presented Bob Dell with a late, tap-in consolation goal. The role that Runcorn and Mr. Eales were to play in deciding our relegation fate 3 weeks later was, as yet, beyond anyones worst imagination.

The Berks & Bucks Final was at Slough against our local rivals from the Southern League, Aylesbury. Bob Dell had a first half penalty saved but we eventually took a 1-0 lead in the second half with a typically well-taken goal by Simon Read. Aylesbury's equaliser took us into extra time, and when they scored again to lead 2-1 with a penalty it looked as though the "Ducks" would be going home with the cup, that is, if they had a home to go to, but the games third penalty was awarded to Wycombe, causing a 5 minute delay while the referee waited for the penalty spot to be re-marked. (What Happened Next?! Unlike in a Question of Sport, very little happened next; no-one came to re-mark the spot). Eventually the ball was placed down and thumped home by Bob Dell to tie things up at 2-2 (and untie the green and white ribbons on the Cup - for the time being anyway).

Back to the League programme once more, a 4-1 Monday evening defeat at Kettering was followed by a 1-0 home win over Wealdstone, whose team and supporters were fading miserably following their F.A. Trophy South Bank Show. An early Simon Read goal earned the points which, in most peoples eyes, finally dispelled any lingering fears of

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relegation. (Oh dear.) At least, it was now clear that only a dreadful sequence of results in our last half dozen games could send us down. (Oh dear. From those last 6 matches we took just 2 points from a possible 15). The next 7 days included defeats at Telford (1-3), Kidderminster (2-8), and Cheltenham (2-4). We now found ourselves only one place above the 'relegation zone', and the drop had suddenly become a distinct possibility. However, Barrow and Dartford were already doomed, and Maidstone, Nuneaton and particularly Dagenham all looked more likely to fill the 3rd spot than ourselves. Our target was now clear - with 3 fixtures remaining, all at home, against Dagenham, Altrincham and Kettering, 3 more points were required to ensure safety. Monday's clash with Dagenham was crucial to both sides, of course. Simon Read's spectacular goal was better than the game deserved; had we held that lead, Dagenham would have there and then been virtually condemned to the drop, but nothing, absolutely nothing, was to go right for us during those last 7 days and the Essex club snatched a late equaliser. We still needed 2 points - 1 win or 2 draws - from the last couple of games. On the Wednesday night Altrincham looked to be there for the taking, but, as Wycombe pressed forward for the goal that would have ended all our worries, with 10 minutes remaining Graham Pearce astounded the whole ground by lobbing a 30 yard own goal over the on-rushing Gary Lester. Result 0-1, an evening of despair and sheer disbelief, and a desperate weekend ahead of us.

It was a very strange feeling, waking up on Saturday morning and knowing that by 4.45 p.m. we could be out of the Gola League. That said, it still seemed unlikely that this would actually happen. A win against Kettering would see us clear; a draw also looked likely to be enough, unless Nuneaton, Maidstone and Dagenham ALL avoided defeat. Even a defeat would not necessarily send us down if the other results were favourable.

Result Wycombe 0 Kettering 0; the closest we came to scoring the all-important goal was when skipper Anton Vircavs rose majestically to a far - post free-kick in the second half and headed firmly and accurately only to see the Kettering 'keeper finger-tip the effort round the post. (How fitting it would have been if Anton could have scored the goal that saved us, having again led the side so admirably throughout the season). We had our single point though, which meant waiting anxiously for the other results of the afternoon. If any one of the other 3 relegation candidates had lost, we knew we would be safe. Incredibly, none of them did, and our future in the Gola League now depended on Dagenham losing, hopefully, at Runcorn the next day. It felt quite unreal to be getting up on a Sunday morning and travelling to Runcorn to see a match which, though not involving us directly, would indirectly affect our immediate future so

drastically. About a dozen people made the trip from Wycombe; not many, perhaps, but it appeared to be about a dozen more than the number of Dagenham supporters present. Our hopes were still high, however, knowing that Runcorn were obviously quite capable of winning comfortably. The first blow to our hopes came before the game even started, when it was announced that Peter Eales was to appear in goal for Runcorn again. "He retired years ago" laughed a group of Runcorn supporters, clearly unconcerned with the relatively trivial matter of a league match with their Wembley visit just a fortnight away. And the second blow to our hopes came just 40 seconds after kick-off, when the Dagenham 'keepers punt upfield was helped by the breeze towards the Runcorn penalty area, where our friend Mr. Eales watched the ball bounce over his head, leaned backwards and tipped the ball into the net. This was not exactly the start we were looking for! That clearance-cum-shot turned out to be Dagenham's only real attempt on goal during the entire 90 minutes, but it was enough. Runcorn equalised early in the second half, but two quite brilliant saves by John Jacobs in the Dagenham goal kept the scores level, and a dozen shattered "Blues" fans drove back down the M6, and back down to the land of the Isthmians. 24 hours later, we had to face Aylesbury again at Slough in the Berks and Bucks Final replay. Not surprisingly, we lost that as well, 1-0.

Still, it's a funny old game, isn't it?

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GOLA LEAGUE MONTHLY GOALSCORING AWARDS 1985/86

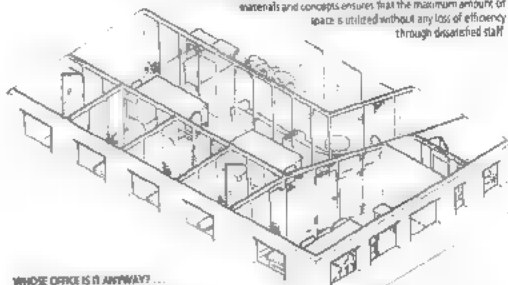
CLUB	TOT VALUE	CLUB	TOT VALUE
Kidder'ster	11 £1772.18	Maidstone	5 £852.23
Frickley	6 £1729.51	Altr'cham	3 £777.78
Enfield	9 £1581.39	Boston	4 £777.13
Barnet	4 £1459.67	Kettering	4 £765.88
Weymouth	■ £1399.85	Northwich	3 £563.19
Runcorn	6 £1162.71	Bath	3 £527.13
Cheltenham	6 £1112.65	Sca'boro	3 £489.93
Stafford	■ £1052.43	Dartford	2 £470.09
Wealdstone	2 £1025.64	Wycombe	2 £456.35
Telford	5 £ 937.70	Dag'ham	2 £192.31
Nuneaton	5 £ 894.35	Barrow	■ £ 0.00
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FINAL TABLE

POS	PTS	HOME					AWAY					PTS
		W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A	
1 Enfield	42	15	4	2	48	20	12	6	3	46	27	76
2 Frickley Athletic	42	16	4	1	46	21	9	■	6	32	29	69
3 Kidderminster Harriers	42	12	4	5	51	28	12	3	6	48	34	67
4 Altrincham	42	14	3	4	42	27	8	8	5	28	22	63
5 Weymouth	42	11	8	2	43	24	8	7	6	32	36	61
6 Runcorn	42	11	6	4	40	17	8	8	5	30	27	60
7 Stafford Rangers	42	10	7	4	30	22	9	6	6	31	32	60
8 Telford United	42	13	5	3	42	24	5	5	11	26	42	51
9 Kettering Town	42	11	6	4	37	24	4	9	8	18	29	49
10 Wealdstone	42	10	5	6	35	28	6	4	11	22	28	47
11 Cheltenham Town	42	13	4	4	47	27	3	7	11	22	42	46
12 Bath City	42	5	8	8	28	25	8	3	10	25	29	45
13 Boston United	42	11	5	■	41	26	5	2	14	25	50	44
14 Barnet	42	9	4	8	32	23	4	7	10	24	37	41
15 Scarborough	42	10	4	7	35	31	3	7	11	19	35	40
16 Northwich Victoria	42	5	6	10	24	25	5	6	10	18	29	37
17 Maidstone United	42	7	9	5	35	29	2	7	12	22	37	36
18 Nuneaton Borough	42	8	3	10	27	27	5	2	14	31	46	36
19 Dagenham	42	6	7	8	23	29	4	■	12	25	37	36
20 Wycombe Wanderers	42	7	6	8	30	35	3	7	11	25	49	36
21 Dartford	42	7	6	8	36	33	1	3	17	15	49	26
22 Barrow	42	5	6	10	26	34	2	2	17	15	52	24

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APPEARANCES

FIRST TEAM APPEARANCES AND GOALSCORERS 1985/86

PLAYERS	APPEARANCES				GOALS			
	LEA	CUP	OTH	TOTAL	LEA	CUP	OTH	TOTAL
Jozef Blochel	21(1)	13	5	39 (1)	4	1	1	6
Richard Blue	-	-	6(1)	6(1)	-	-	-	-
Gary Boyle	1(3)	-	6	7 (3)	-	-	-	-
Dave Bradley	1	-	5(5)	6 (5)	-	-	-	-
Graham Bressington	8(4)	-	4(1)	12 (5)	-	-	2	2
Trevor Bunting	-	-(1)	8(2)	8 (3)	-	-	-	-
Dave Burgess	37	18	5(2)	60 (2)	1	1	1	3
Kevin Collins	36(2)	18	12(3)	66 (5)	2	-	1	3
Kevin Connolly	6	-	2	8	1	-	-	1
Kevin Day	-	-	4	4	-	-	-	-
Bob Dell	32(1)	19	8(1)	59 (2)	4	5	2	11
Roy Fairchild	7(8)	1(1)	9(2)	17(11)	-	-	4	4
Kenny Glasgow	-	-	3	3	-	-	-	-
Andy Harman	9(6)	5(4)	6(2)	20(12)	-	1	2	3
Bill Hubbick	1(1)	2(2)	13(1)	16 (4)	-	1	2	3
Gary Lester	42	19	11	67	-	-	-	-
Declan Link	19	6	8(1)	33 (1)	11	5	8	24
Andy Longstaff	-(1)	-	2	2 (1)	-	-	2	2
Des McMahon	18(2)	10(2)	6(3)	34 (7)	-	2	-	2
Graham Pearce	26	6	7	39	1	-	-	1
Neil Price	5	1	5	11	-	-	-	-
Sean Price	6	3	12	21	-	-	-	-
Simon Read	38	18	5(2)	61(2)	12	12	5	29
John Richardson	2(1)	1	4(2)	7(3)	-	-	-	-
Rolston Ricketts	-	-	2	2	-	-	1	1
Anthony Riley	25(2)	13(1)	12(2)	50(5)	-	-	1	1
Martin Snow	2	1	6	9	-	-	-	-
Neal Stanley	37(2)	15(2)	13(1)	65(5)	4	4	3	11
Steve Toll	7	4	1	12	-	-	-	-
Anton Vircaus	41	18	12	71	-	2	2	4
Stuart Walton	-	-	5	5	-	-	-	-
Mark West	35(2)	18	15(3)	68(5)	13	5	12	30
Own Goals	-	-	-	-	2	1	2	5
MAXIMUM/TOTAL	42	19	20	81	55	40	53	148

SPONSORSHIP

TREND PLAYER OF THE MONTH SPONSORSHIP

As part of the TREND sponsorship of this competition the following charities have received cheques for £25.00 as nominated by the player.

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NOV	SIMON READ	HARLOW HOUSE DAY HOSPITAL
DEC	GARY LESTER	MERRYFIELDS, BOOKER, TRAINING CENTRE FOR MENTALLY HANDICAPPED
JAN	GARY LESTER	WHITE LION ROAD MENTALLY HANDICAPPED CENTRE FOR ADULTS, LITTLE CHALFONT
FEB	ANTON VIRCAUS	THE MAYOR'S MACMILLAN NURSES APPEAL
MAR	NEAL STANLEY	MICKLEFIELD ROAD CHILDREN'S HOME
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RUNCORN	The Blues Club.
WEALDSTONE	Equity & Law Assurance Society Plc., High Wycombe.

RESULTS 1985-86

DATE	OPPONENTS	COMP	V	RESULT	SCORERS	ATT
Fri 2 Aug	CREWE ALEXANDRA	Fr	H	L 0-1		400
Thu 8 Aug	TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR	Fr	H	D 3-3	Link, Vircavs, Read	700
Sat 10 Aug	Walton & Hersham	Fr	A	W 3-1	Read, West, og	120
Tue 13 Aug	Newbury Town	Fr	A	W 3-0	West, Link, Read	120
Thu 15 Aug	Met. Police	Fr	A	D 1-1	Vircavs	60
Sat 17 Aug	Sutton United	DCS	A	W 3-1	Link, Read, Stanley	500
Tue 20 Aug	GENEVA COLLEGE	Fr	H	W 10-0	West 4, Link 4, og	150
				Fairchild		
Sat 24 Aug	RUNCORN	GL	H	L 0-1		1036
Mon 26 Aug	Barnet	GL	A	W 1-0	Link	1081
Sat 31 Aug	Altrincham	GL	A	L 3-4	Read, Link 2	1006
Tue 3 Sep	DARTFORD	GL	H	W 3-2	Link 2, Pearce	886
Sat 7 Sep	Dagenham	GL	A	D 1-1	Read	584
Tue 10 Sep	Dartford	GL	A	L 0-1		437
Sat 14 Sep	STAFFORD RANGERS	GL	H	L 2-4	Read, Link	767
Tue 17 Sep	WEYMOUTH	BLT1	H	L 1-3	Link	682
Sat 21 Sep	Barrow	GL	A	D 1-1	West	517
Wed 25 Sep	Weymouth	BLT1	A	L 2-4	Stanley, Vircavs	740
Sat 28 Sep	ENFIELD	GL	H	W 1-0	Link	1068
Tue 1 Oct	HUNEATON BOROUGH	GL	H	W 2-0	Read, West	786
Sat 5 Oct	Scarborough	GL	A	W 2-1	West, Dell	805
Wed 9 Oct	Maidstone United	GL	A	D 1-1	Link	770
Sat 12 Oct	WEYMOUTH	GL	H	L 0-3		1001
Tue 15 Oct	CHEL TENHAM TOWN	GL	H	D 3-3	Read, og, Link	825
Thu 17 Oct	WIMBLEDON	CL	H	L 1-2	West	235
Sat 19 Oct	Northwich Vic.	GL	A	L 0-4		787
Tue 22 Oct	Buckingham Town	B&B1	A	W 2-1	Link 2	400
Sat 26 Oct	BURTON ALBION	FAC4q	H	W 1-0	Read	1157
Sat 2 Nov	BARROW	GL	H	D 1-1	Link	761
Mon 4 Nov	OXFORD UNIV.	Fr	H	D 1-1	Stanley	53
Sat 9 Nov	Healdstone	GL	A	L 0-2		925
Tue 12 Nov	HUNGERFORD	B&B2	H	W 9-0	Read 2, Link 2, West, Dell, Burgess McMahon, Stanley	179
Sat 16 Nov	COLCHESTER UNITED	FAC1	H	W 2-0	West, Read	3089
Tue 19 Nov	ENFIELD	CL	H	L 2-4	Burgess, West	99
Sat 23 Nov	Bath City	GL	A	L 1-3	West	758
Tue 26 Nov	BRENTFORD	CL	H	L 2-4	Read, Link	103
Sat 30 Nov	NORTHWICH VIC.	GL	H	D 1-1	Link	663
Sat 7 Dec	CHELMSFORD CITY	FAC2	H	W 2-0	Read, MacMahon	3816
Mon 9 Dec	Dagenham	CL	A	D 0-0		50
Sat 14 Dec	BOSTON UNITED	GL	H	W 4-1	Read, West 2, Stanley	741
Tue 17 Dec	ORIENT	CL	H	W 1-0	Hubbick	124
Sat 21 Dec	Barnet	FAT1	A	W 1-0	West	882
Thu 26 Dec	Nuneaton Borough	GL	A	L 0-3		649
Sat 4 Jan	York City	FAC3	A	L 0-2		5632
Sat 11 Jan	MAIDSTONE UNITED	GL	H	D 2-2	West, Blochel	794
Sat 18 Jan	Crawley Town	FAT2	A	W 2-0	o.g. Blochel	1150
Tue 21 Jan	MAIDENHEAD UNITED	B&B3	H	W 3-1	Read, Vircavs	448
				Hubbick		
Sat 25 Jan	Enfield	GL	A	W 3-2	Dell 2, West	1112
Sat 1 Feb	SCARBOROUGH	GL	H	W 2-1	Blochel, Stanley	680
Wed 5 Feb	Weymouth	GL	A	D 1-1	Stanley	630
Wed 12 Feb	LEEK TOWN	FAT3	H	D 2-2	Dell, Read	417
Sat 15 Feb	Boston United	GL	A	D 1-1	West	1213
Tue 4 Mar	Leek Town	FAT3r	A	B 5-5	West, Read 2, Dell Stanley	1081
Thu 6 Mar	FLACKWELL WEATH	B&B5F	H	W 3-0	Dell, Read, Harman	428
Sat 8 Mar	Frickley Ath.	GL	A	D 2-2	West, Blochel	537
Mon 10 Mar	Leek Town	FAT3r	H	B 1-1	Stanley	696
Thu 13 Mar	Leek Town	FAT3r	H	W 1-0	West	690
Sat 15 Mar	BARNET	GL	H	W 2-0	Read, Stanley	832
Mon 17 Mar	Kettering Town	FAT4	A	L 1-2	Read	2312
Sat 22 Mar	TELFORD	GL	H	L 1-2	West	754
Tue 25 Mar	BATH CITY	GL	H	L 1-4	Read	540
Thu 27 Mar	WEALDSTONE	CL	H	W 4-3	Longstaff, Blochel Fairchild 2	64
Sat 29 Mar	Stafford Rangers	GL	A	D 1-1	o.g.	1035
Mon 31 Mar	FRICKLEY ATH.	GL	H	L 1-3	Burgess	831
Wed 2 Apr	GILLINGHAM	CL	H	W 3-1	West 2, Riley	77
Sat 5 Apr	KIDDERMINSTER	GL	H	L 2-5	West, Read	621
Tue 8 Apr	Runcorn	GL	A	L 1-2	Dell	550
Thu 10 Apr	BARNET	CL	H	W 4-1	Ricketts, Harman 2 Fairchild	88
Sat 12 Apr	Aylesbury United	B&B6F	H	B 2-2	Read, Dell	1064
Mon 14 Apr	Kettering	GL	A	L 1-4	West	662
Wed 16 Apr	Dartford	CL	A	W 1-0	Longstaff	25
Sat 19 Apr	WEALDSTONE	GL	H	W 1-0	Read	889
Tue 22 Apr	Telford	GL	A	L 1-3	Blochel	1066
Thu 24 Apr	Kidderminster	GL	A	L 2-8	Connolly, Collins	704
Sat 26 Apr	Cheltenham Town	GL	A	L 2-4	Collins, Read	694
Mon 28 Apr	DAGENHAM	CL	H	D 1-1	Read	570
Wed 30 Apr	ALTRINCHAM	GL	H	L 0-1		544
Sat 3 May	KETTERING TOWN	GL	H	D 0-0		715
Mon 5 May	Aylesbury United	B&BFR	N	L 0-1		1306
Tue 6 May	SOUTHERN UNITED	CL	H	L 2-3	Smy, Jenkins	51
Tue 27 May	Egaleo AEK	TOUR	A	W 5-4	Dell 2, Collins, Bressington, West, Stanley, Hubbick, Bressington	
Fri 30 May	Olympiakos	TOUR	A	W 4-0		

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